

# T H E L O U N G E R.

[N<sup>o</sup> XLIV.]

Saturday, Dec. 3. 1785.

To the LOUNGER.

S I R,

I Have observed, that the greatest part of your correspondents have given you a detail of grievances and complaints. In disclosing their misfortunes they have no doubt conveyed to your readers some useful lessons, for avoiding those errors of conduct which in general have been the cause of them: but the picture of happiness may often prove as instructive as that of calamity or distress; and in that view, while I gratify my own feelings by the following narrative, I flatter myself it may not be unprofitable to others.

My father, Sir, inherited an estate in one of the northern counties of this kingdom, a property once considerable, and which had been in his family for some generations; but which, during his life and that of my grandfather, had, from a certain easiness of temper bordering upon improvidence, and their humane endeavours to assist their needy relations, been so greatly reduced, that at my father's death it was necessary to bring the estate to sale for the payment of his debts. A trifling reversion remained for the support of my mother, myself, and an only sister; and with this slender provision we betook ourselves to a small farm-house, which my mother rented from the new possessor of our paternal lands. Here, by her uncommon industry, and the exertions of a spirit superior to her misfortunes, she maintained her little household decently and respectably, while she gained the esteem and admiration of the whole neighbourhood. My sister, who was some years younger than myself, was accustomed almost from infancy to bear her part in the management of the family. My mother had taught us reading, writing, and the first rudiments of arithmetic; and the clergyman of the parish was at pains to instruct me in the elements of the Greek and Latin languages, of which, in a few years, I obtained a competent knowledge. This worthy man, whose name was *Johnson*, had been the friend and companion of my father from their earliest infancy, and thus considered himself as bound by duty to be a guardian and parent to his children. He had himself an only daughter, of equal age with my sister, and whom, in those days of childhood and innocence, I regarded alike, with the affection of a brother. But on this first period of my life, though the recollection is delightful, I forbear to enlarge.

I had now attained my fifteenth year, and it became necessary to think of some profession by which I might make my way in the world. My inclination led me to the study of medicine, which I had prosecuted for some time with great assiduity, when a near relation of my mother's, who warmly interested himself in our welfare, procured for me the commission of a surgeon's mate on board an Indiaman. The ship to which I belonged was to sail within a fortnight after I received intelligence of my appointment. My mother prepared for me a stock of linens, and other necessaries, to which she added a purse with fifteen guineas. The worthy Mr Johnson gave me a pocket-bible, with his blessing. My sister, and his daughter *Emmy*, gave me their tears; for that was all they had to bestow: but from the tears of the latter I felt an emotion of tenderness beyond what even the affection of a brother could produce. I had unconsciously nourished an attachment of

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which this parting first taught me the force, but which at the same time it obliged me to stifle and conceal.

After a voyage of six months, our ship arrived in the Ganges. During my stay at Calcutta, I was fortunate enough to recommend myself to a countryman of my own, then high in the council; by whose interest, with my captain's leave, I obtained an appointment of surgeon to a small settlement of the Company's, which bordered on the territory of the Nabob of ——. Various, Sir, are the methods of acquiring wealth in India. Of these the obvious and apparent are so well known, that they need not be mentioned: the more mysterious courses to affluence, as I never was solicitous myself to unravel, so I am not well qualified to explain. It is enough for me to say, that with a good conscience, and during a twelve years exercise of a profession serviceable to my fellow creatures, I acquired what to me appeared a competency. In short, Sir, being now possessed of a fortune of L. 25,000, I began to think of returning to my native country. I had from time to time, during the last years of my stay in India, remitted such sums to my mother as I judged might enable her to exchange her toilsome and parsimonious mode of life for ease and comfort; but she wrote to me, that industry was now become familiar, and even agreeable, that she could not relish the bread of idleness, and that it was sufficient happiness for her and for my sister to be assured of my health and prosperity. By the last opportunity that preceded my leaving India, I had acquainted my mother of my intention of returning home in the following spring. This intention I put in execution; and bringing with me the best part of my fortune, landed in safety on the coast of Britain, after an absence of thirteen years and a half.

A few days travelling brought me once more to the spot of my nativity. I stopped in the afternoon within a few miles of the place, and wrote the following billet.

"Jack Truman sends the bearer, his servant, to acquaint his dearest mother and sister, that he is within a day's journey of Brookland farm, and proposes, by God's blessing, to be with them to-morrow morning."

This note was meant to give them time to prepare for our meeting; but I had not patience to wait my man's return, and set out a few minutes after him. I need not describe the emotions I felt at sight of my native fields, the recollection of which, distance of place and length of time had rather endeared than impaired. I had little leisure to indulge the remembrance: my mother and sister, equally impatient with myself, had come out to watch the road by which I was to arrive. Our meeting was such as might be expected from affection heightened by the anxieties of absence; our joy, such as prosperity can give to those to whom prosperity has not always been known, to those whom prosperity enables to make others happy.

You will easily figure, Sir, those topics which after so long an absence would naturally be the subject of our conversation. One of the first inquiries I made was about the worthy Mr Johnson and his amiable daughter. My mother informed me that this good man was then in the last stage of a painful disease, under which he had languished above three years, and which his constitution could not thus long have resisted but for the tender care and dutiful attention of his daughter Emmy; that this affectionate child had, as was thought from that motive alone, rejected several advantageous offers of marriage. To this my sister added, that she was one of the loveliest and most accomplished of women.

On my way to the farm, I had remarked the ruinous appearance of

of the mansion-house, which had been the seat of my forefathers. My mother informed me, that the gentleman who purchased the estate from our family had been some years dead; and that his son, by a course of extravagance, had so embarrassed his fortune, that it was thought he would soon be obliged to sell the greatest part of his landed property. An opportunity thus presenting itself of recovering my paternal estate, I determined to offer immediately to become the purchaser; and flattered myself with the prospect (I hope it was an honest pride) of re-establishing our ancient family in the domain of their ancestors.

The first visit I paid to Mr Johnson led me to form schemes of a nature yet more delightful to my imagination. Long absence, and the bustle of an active life, had lulled asleep without extinguishing that affection with which his lovely daughter had inspired me in my early years. The sight of the beautiful Emma revived that passion in its utmost force, and convinced me that she was the arbitress of my future happiness or misery. I thought I perceived in the tender confusion, the diffidence and modesty of her demeanor, and in the simplicity of a heart untaught to disguise its emotions, that I was far from being indifferent to her; nor was I deceived in this flattering idea. Her father's dissolution was fast approaching. He survived my return but a few months; and the last act of his public duty was the union of our hands.

Five years have elapsed since that event; and I hope, Sir, you will not think my narrative tedious, if I give a short sketch of the manner in which I have passed that happy period.

The transaction for the purchase of our estate was attended with very little difficulty; and the restoration of the family to its ancient territories was celebrated by all the tenants and cottagers with high festivity, and every mark of heart-felt satisfaction. I began immediately to repair the desolated mansion-house; and having myself some taste in architecture, contrived to render it a most commodious habitation, without injuring the antiquity of its appearance, which I venerated. The apartments were repaired in the modern fashion; and the elegance of my Emma's taste displayed itself in their furniture and decorations. In a few particulars I indulged perhaps a little caprice. The wide-extended chimney of the hall, which its late proprietor had contracted to the modern scale, and decorated with Dutch porcelaine, I enlarged once more to its original dimensions. It was a venerable monument of ancient hospitality. My grandfather's oaken chair was found mouldering in a garret.—It was restored to its place.—The top of a square tower I fitted up into a library, lighted by a large Gothic window with leaden casements; from whence by day I command a beautiful landscape of the country, and by night can explore the heavens with my telescope; and here, in my favourite studies of philosophy, general physics, and classical literature, of which I have a pretty numerous collection of the best authors, I pass many delightful hours. In another part of the building I have a small laboratory for chymical experiments, and the composition of medicines. Those researches to which I was formerly led by my profession, still furnish me with an amusing, and even an useful employment; for, while Providence blesses me with health, I will always be the poor man's physician.

As I am rather unwilling to occupy myself with practical husbandry, a science which without a peculiar bent and inclination I have always thought was not rashly to be engaged in, I limit my rustic employments to planting and gardening. The fields which surround my house owe their principal beauties to nature. The upland and  
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barren spots I have covered with wood, which in a few years will afford both beauty and shelter. Assisted by my Emma's judgement, I have laid out a large garden, which promises soon to furnish me with a profusion of the most delicate fruits. A fine trouting stream washes its border. My hills pasture my mutton, and supply my game; of which the first is excellent, and the last is plentiful.

Soon after our establishment at the mansion-house, my mother and sister quitted their habitation, and became members of our family. The farm, which had become a very profitable subject, has been transferred to an old domestic, who had remained attached to the family in all the changes of its fortune, and who merited that reward of his services and fidelity. My mother, whose active mind would languish, if deprived of an object of exertion, has now found another occupation not less suited to her taste, and yet more pleasing in its nature. My Emma has brought me three children; two charming girls and a stout healthy boy. These she has suckled herself, a part of the duty of a mother which she finds too agreeable to be relinquished to a hireling. The two eldest are now in charge to their grandmother, who has undertaken for them the same office she performed to myself; and in this the good woman flatters herself with a renewal of her years. My sister was wont for some time to share in the same occupation; but I don't know how, her disposition seems a good deal changed of late. In place of her work she has taken to reading poetry; and borrows a good deal of time from her cares of the dairy, to bestow it on her books and her toilet. It is true, my neighbour *Hearty's* son Tom is a scholar, and when he comes here with his family (and they are very frequent visitors of ours), my sister and he seem very solicitous to please each other; a circumstance I am not at all sorry to observe. Tom is a very worthy young man, and my sister an excellent girl: She has one quality to which Tom is a stranger; I have taken care that she shall be intitled to L. 1500 on the day of her marriage.

Such, Mr Lounger, is my manner of life; and as I perceive from some of your late papers, that you can contrive to pass a few weeks in the country, without discontinuing to amuse the town, if you will do me the honour of a visit, I promise you the best bed in my house, a bottle of my best wine, and the best welcome I can give. I am, Sir, yours, &c.

JOHN TRUMAN.

I am aware that people are apt to be fastidious in the perusal of tales of happiness; but feeling an interest in the good family whose story is told in the foregoing letter, I have ventured to insert it, simple as it is, and not perhaps leading to any important conclusion. One lesson, however, it may serve to inculcate, that moderation in point of wealth is productive of the greatest comfort and the purest felicity. Had Mr Truman returned from India with the enormous fortune of some other Asiatic adventurers, he would probably have been much less happy than he is, even without considering the means by which it is possible such a fortune might have been acquired. In the possession of such overgrown wealth, however attained, there is generally more ostentation than pleasure; more pride than enjoyment: I can but guess at the feelings which accompany it, when reaped from desolated provinces, when covered with the blood of slaughtered myriads.

E D I N B U R G H :

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